

PLAN

of the CITY of
Washington
in the Territory of Columbia
ceded by the States of
VIRGINIA and MARYLAND
to the
United States of America
and by them established
SEAT of their GOVERNMENT
after the Year
MDCCC.

Breadth of the Streets
The ground, houses, and such streets as lead to
places, are from 60 to 100 feet wide, and may be
into foot ways, walks of trees, and a carriage way
are from 30 to 100 feet wide
IN order to show the plan, Mr. ELLICOTT

PART OF VIRGINIA WITHIN THE TERRITORY OF COLUMBIA
OBSERVATIONS
of the
plan.

of direct communication have been devised,
and most distinct objects with the principal,
the whole a responsibility of sight as the same time
to the passing of these buildings, becomes more the
for prospect and construction.

30. 33. N.
0. 0.

GEORGETOWN

Work in the District of Columbia

Cabin John Bridge.

Office of History, Corps of Engineers



Montgomery C. Meigs.



Library of Congress

Army engineers contributed to both the planning and construction of the nation's capital. From early bridges to the modern subway system, Corps officers and civilians helped plan and construct Washington's transportation system, city monuments and public buildings. Parks, water supply and sewage systems, flood control structures and public health measures in the city were or still are the engineers' responsibility. Army engineers served as administrators as well as construction experts. Their influence and responsibilities declined only as civilian agencies assumed control of certain activities and home-rule movements lessened federal responsibility for public works in Washington.

In 1791 former Army Engineer Pierre Charles L'Enfant designed the master plan for the new capital. Other Army engineers designed and built fortifications for the city. The British Army destroyed some of those defenses as well as the partially built Capitol building during the War of 1812. Chief Engineer Joseph G. Swift helped rebuild the Capitol. In 1822 Major Isaac Rober-

deau, a topographical engineer, supervised the installation of cast iron pipes to bring spring water to the White House and the executive offices around it. In the 1850s, Congress funded the construction of a permanent water supply for the cities of Washington and Georgetown. Eventually placed under the supervision of engineer First Lieutenant Montgomery C. Meigs, the project evolved into what is today the Washington Aqueduct Office of the U.S. Army Engineer District, Baltimore. Meigs' plans included construction of two bridges to carry traffic as well as water pipes, one over Cabin John Creek and one over Rock Creek. Both bridges were engineering feats of their time and the Cabin John Bridge remains in use. This bridge, begun in 1857 and completed in 1864, held the world's record for 40 years for having the longest masonry arch in the world.

Meigs and other engineer officers also reconstructed the United States Capitol, fireproofed the Smithsonian Institution and rebuilt or repaired bridges and streets. Using new techniques, Meigs provided

Andrew Ellicott's plan of
Washington, D.C. 1792.

National Archives



Public Affairs Office, Corps of Engineers

the first adequate heating and ventilation system for the home of Congress. As construction of the two new wings of the Capitol progressed, the old dome began to look disproportionately small, and a new dome was designed that consisted of cast and wrought iron and weighed almost nine million pounds. President Abraham Lincoln used the completion of that dome during the Civil War as a symbol of his intention to preserve the Union.

After the Civil War, Corps officers and civilians designed and built many of the monuments and public buildings that decorate Washington today. At the request of the Senate, Major Nathaniel Michler surveyed sites for a new park and a new location for the White House. His praise drew attention to Rock Creek Valley. Later, the Chief of Engineers, Brigadier General Thomas L. Casey, and other officers worked for and supervised the development of that large urban park.

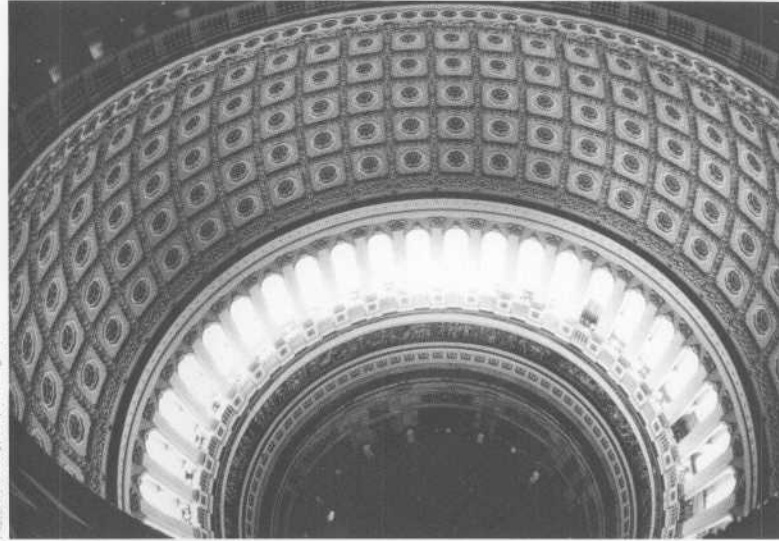
Congress continued to institutionalize the Corps' role in the District. In, 1867 the legislators removed control of many public buildings from civilian hands and gave it to what became the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds under the Chief of Engineers. In 1878 Congress permanently replaced Washington's elected government with a three-man commission. An Army engineer holding the title of Engineer Commissioner for the District of Columbia served on that governing board with responsibility for the city's physical plant. Meanwhile, other engineer work in the District grew to the extent that the Chief of Engineers, Brigadier General Andrew A. Humphreys, established in 1874 the United States Engineer Office, Washington, under the civilian engineer Sylvanus T. Abert, to carry out navigation improvements on the Potomac River and its tributaries.

Office of History, Corps of Engineers

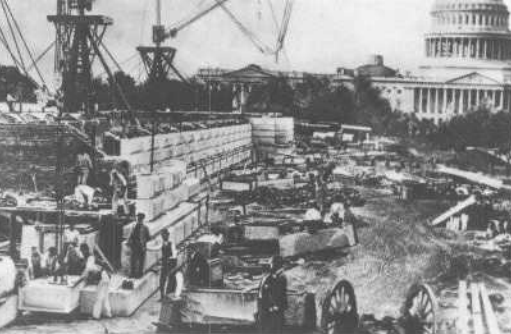


Thomas L. Casey prepares to set aluminum apex for Washington Monument, from a sketch made for *Harper's Weekly*.

Interior of the Capitol, photographed from the dome.



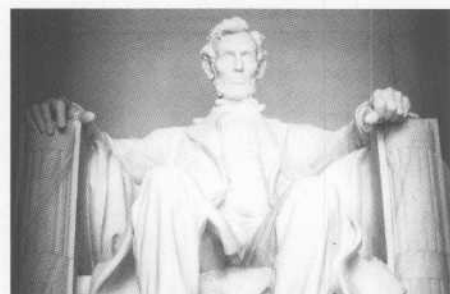
Office of History, Corps of Engineers



Library of Congress under construction, 1888.

Public Affairs Office, Corps of Engineers

Daniel Chester French's Abraham Lincoln, Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.



Public Affairs Office, Corps of Engineers

Two years later, Congress asked the Corps to complete the Washington Monument, left partially built by its bankrupt sponsors. Then Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Casey and his assistant, Bernard Green, corrected major problems with its foundation, redesigned it and supervised its completion. The construction culminated in December 1884, with the placing on its tip of a pyramid of 100 ounces of aluminum, the largest piece yet cast in the Western Hemisphere of the new metal. Casey and Green went on to help design and supervise the construction of the State, War and Navy Building next to the White House. It is now the Executive Office Building. The two men also helped design and construct the Library of Congress.

Between the 1880s and the 1920s, Corps dredge and fill operations not only protected Washington from Potomac and Anacostia river floods, but also created waterfront park land. Potomac Park, Washington Channel with its adjacent recreation areas and the land for the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials all are products of this river improvement and swamp reclamation work. The attractive tidal basin in front of the Jefferson memorial that automatically changes the water in the Washington Channel with the tidal flow is another product of this work.

Meanwhile Lieutenant Colonel William W. Harts of the Office of Buildings and Grounds took charge of the development of Rock Creek Park, which became a major resource for urban recreation and beauty. Harts also supervised the completion of three important memorials. In 1913 he directed the start of work on the new headquarters of the American Red Cross. The following year he oversaw the beginning of construction on the Lincoln Memorial and the Arlington

Memorial Amphitheater and Chapel.

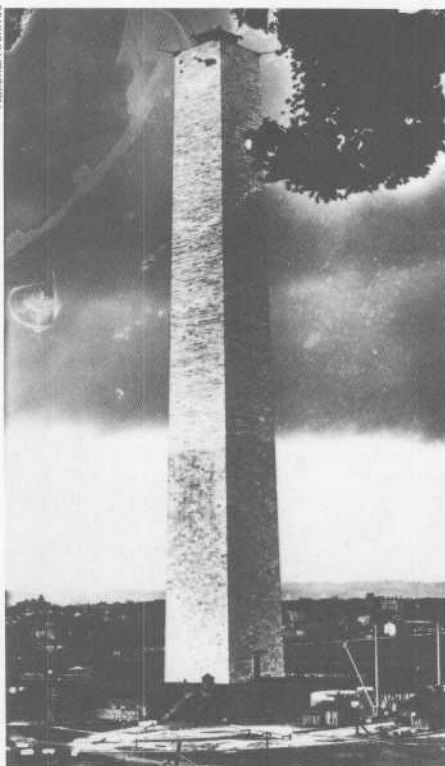
The Corps also built or supervised the construction of practical and attractive buildings to house the government of the reunited nation, including the Government Printing Office and the Army War College at Fort McNair. In 1883 Meigs came out of retirement to build the Pension Building. Designed to house the offices providing pensions to war veterans, the building is so attractive that it is sometimes used for inaugural activities.

The George Washington Memorial Parkway, the Pentagon and National Airport began as pre-World War II construction projects of the Corps of Engineers. After World War II, the Corps was involved in the complete gutting and rebuilding of the inside of the White House, expanding the water supply for the District and planning for housing and transportation.

U. S. Grant III, grandson of the President, and other officers served on the planning boards that oversaw growth in the Washington metropolitan area. Gradually, civilian agencies such as the National Park Service began to assume responsibility for developing the buildings, streets, sewage systems and parks which the Corps had handled in addition to its ordinary activities.

The Washington Aqueduct alone remains a special responsibility of the U.S. Army Engineer District, Baltimore. The Baltimore District also carries out all current civil works and military projects in the Washington area, including the massive renovation project for the Pentagon.

National Archives



Washington Monument, February 1884.